Fast Forward Georgia

A Publication of the Georgia Technology Authority

A new door to government

Among the portal's convenient features are pull-down menus under "I want to..." and "How do I..." to help users go directly to the information they need.

Sixty days before the driver's license expiration date, renewal applications are mailed directly to qualified drivers. To be qualified, a driver must have a valid photo, fingerprint and signature saved on file digitally with DMVS, and there can be no outstanding infringements on the driving record. The renewal application contains an individualized resident identification number (RIN) that the customer uses to renew online, along with the month and day of the last exam date from the current license or ID card. Online renewal takes less than five minutes, and the replacement license is mailed in about 30 days.

State government information and services became several clicks closer when the Georgia Enterprise Portal, www.georgia.gov, went live on July 1.

The new portal, georgia.gov, gives Georgians online access to information from agencies across state government, all from a single electronic door. During the first week alone, a daily average of more than 47,000 state Web pages were accessed via the portal.

Giving Georgians a choice

Online driver's license renewal is the first new service to debut on the portal.

Drivers who meet certain criteria can renew their license without going to a **Department of Motor Vehicle Safety** (DMVS) office. "This is a quick, secure and convenient way to renew a driver's license anytime of the day or night from the comfort of your home or office. The DMVS has developed a very secure method to issue licenses online," said DMVS Commissioner Tim Burgess. In the first nine days following the portal launch, 746 Georgians renewed their driver's license online.

Clarity and convenience are key

The design of georgia.gov is the result of extensive research. Input came from a broad range of sources, including four consumer focus groups conducted in Savannah and Atlanta, more than 140 state government employees, 300 respondents to an online survey, and interviews with local government officials.

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GTA
Georgia Technology Authority

GTA to rebid CCOP

GTA will seek new proposals for the Converged Communications Outsourcing Project (CCOP), the state's far-reaching telecommunications project.

Rebidding the project became necessary because of the uncertain prospects of MCI WorldCom, Inc., one of two bidders on CCOP. The other bidder was Connect Georgia, a team led by BellSouth, AT&T, Electronic Data Systems, and Lockheed Martin.

"It is in the interest of the state to have to most competitive bid process possible," said Larry Singer, state CIO and GTA executive director. "CCOP lays the foundation for Georgia to become the most wired state in the nation by acquiring a modern telecommunications network that will expand educational, work and business opportunities across the state. Reopening the bid process at this time is necessary because the conditions under which WorldCom prequalified for the bid are no longer valid."

A new request for proposals (RFP) will be issued in August 2002, with proposals due in November. Vendor selection is expected in April 2003, while the contract's effective date remains July 1, 2003. Affected state employees will still be transferred to the selected vendor in May 2003 as previously announced.

CCOP: What's in, What's out

Services covered by the new CCOP RFP:

- Local, long distance, and wireless phone service
- High-speed online access
- Local area networks
- Personal computing equipment and support
- Two-way interoperable radio and mobile data

The state will seek independent proposals for these items, formerly part of CCOP:

- Acquisition of a new state data center
- Conversion to digital broadcasting for Georgia Public Broadcasting
- Navigator highway camera system

RFP will be slightly modified

GTA will not require prequalification of bidders on the new RFP, and slight modifications will be made in the RFP pricing models to reflect changing conditions in the telecom market since the project was first conceived. A stringent assessment of bidders' financial condition and general business prospects will continue throughout the evaluation and negotiation process.

"Although the RFP will not substantially change," Mr. Singer said, "we are making modifications based on what we've learned from the process so far to encourage more competition and ensure better value for the state. Among those modifications is removing from the CCOP bid request components that are not integral to the creation of a converged telecommunications infrastructure and are not in the core competency of the systems integrators and telecommunications firms that are expected to bid on CCOP."

The new proposals will undergo an extensive evaluation by representatives from state, county and city government and organizations. Technical and pricing aspects of the proposals will be evaluated separately and then combined to determine which offers the best value.

"Our goals for this project remain the same," Mr. Singer said. "We are seeking to provide a modern, converged and interoperable communications network for state and local government agencies, including schools, libraries and city or county offices throughout the state." ▮

GTA Web resource helps vendors

A new resource on the GTA Web site helps vendors who are interested in doing business with GTA. The Vendor Information page is an ideal place for vendors who want to provide GTA with product information, request a meeting to demonstrate their products or find answers to many common questions.

To open the page, select **Vendor Information** under the **Information** heading on GTA's Web site at www.gta.ga.gov. You'll see a comprehensive list of frequently asked questions and a Vendor Contact Form, which enables vendors to submit information about a product or service directly to the appropriate contact at GTA. ▮

Digital Academy

A Georgia Technology Authority

Special Report

Summer 2002

First class graduates from Georgia Digital Academy

More than 25 participants from 18 state agencies graduated May 22, 2002, from the pilot session of the Georgia Digital Academy, a learning program sponsored by GTA. The academy brings state agencies together to develop technical solutions to common business problems.

The pilot focused on document management, which uses computer technology to manage electronic and print documents. The topic was recommended by numerous state agencies. Document management technologies are already in use at several agencies, and others are considering it as a way to catalog and store the rapidly growing number of electronic documents. These technologies also make it possible to convert paper documents to electronic format.

Although the roles and responsibilities of state agencies vary widely, they face many of the same challenges in using technology to meet their business needs. With the academy, state agencies now have an effective way to share knowledge and resources.

"The Georgia Digital Academy has given us a great start in breaking down the divide between state agencies," said Amelia Winstead, local government services coordinator at **State Archives**. "The group sessions have created a cooperative environment and level of communication rarely achieved in state government."

Program managers played an important role

Non-technical professionals played just as important a role in the pilot as information technology professionals. The participation of program managers and other staff directly involved in business operations was considered essential since decisions about technology should be based on how well it supports program and service goals.

GTA selected **Southern Polytechnic State University** (SPSU), a unit of the University System of Georgia, to manage the academy and facilitate sessions. SPSU is nationally recognized for its technology and science programs, many of which are designed especially for nontraditional students.

Beginning March 20, participants met one day each week for 10 weeks at SPSU. Since the session was the academy's pilot, they initially spent much of their time deciding how to organize the academy.

"These were important decisions because they laid the groundwork for future academy sessions," said Robert Woodruff, director of GTA's Office of Technology. "Agencies figured out for themselves the best way to work together."

Users group will offer ongoing assistance

Once these questions were settled, participants began their evaluation of various document management technologies. They are also forming a users group, which will conduct further research and ultimately recommend standards for all state agencies to use when implementing document management projects.

The sessions created a cooperative environment rarely achieved in state government.

The academy's work can save state agencies time and money as they plan and implement document management projects. They can build on the academy's findings and move forward much faster than would otherwise be possible. Agencies can also turn to the users group for ongoing assistance.

The users group isn't the only resource to encourage continued learning and professional development. Upon graduation, each participant received a one year's membership in the Association for Information and Image Management, an international professional group that helps members apply document management technologies to their business operations.

Next: Active Directory

The academy's pilot laid a strong foundation for subsequent sessions. The second session, which began June 24, focuses on active directory, a system for managing access to resources such as e-mail and printers on local area networks. ▮

THE DIGITAL ACADEMY

Digital Academy jump-starts Vital Records transformation

The way state government manages some of the public's most important records—like birth and death certificates, marriage and divorce reports—is much the same today as it was in 1919. For the most part, it's a paper-driven, manual process. But Michael Lavoie, state registrar of Vital Records, has a plan to change all that.

His bold vision will transform the way **Vital Records** does business and make it possible for the public to obtain copies of documents over the state portal. Mr. Lavoie, director of Vital Records at the **Department of Human Resources**, took part this spring in the Digital Academy's session on document management, and what he learned is helping turn his vision into reality.

It's like an old pickup truck. It still runs, but you don't know when it's going to quit.

Mr. Lavoie leads a team of 69 employees who registered almost 360,000 documents in 2001. They also responded to tens of thousands of requests for copies of documents from the general public and local, state and federal agencies.

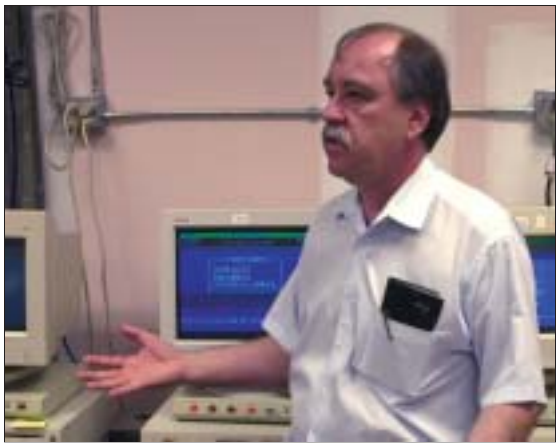
Birth records are currently the most automated, but Vital Records staff still depends more than you'd imagine on manual processing and data entry. Many workers use both a PC and a mainframe terminal, which often requires them to go from one desk to another to do their jobs.

Even the system for storing digital images of birth certificates is nine years old and long obsolete by today's IT standards. It still runs Windows 3.1 and old flavors of Oracle and Wang software.

"Technology moves ahead very fast," Mr. Lavoie said. "This system, one of the first imaging systems used by the state, was cutting edge when it was put in. Now, it's like an old pickup truck. It still runs, but you don't know when it's going to quit."

Searching boxes stacked floor to ceiling

Unfortunately, it quits with increasing frequency. On a recent Monday morning, the system crashed when the customer service center was filled with people who needed copies of birth certificates. It takes two hours to reboot the system. Meanwhile, customer service representatives are left to search manually through microfilm for birth certificates. If they can't find them on microfilm, the next stop is a large room where paper copies are stored in boxes stacked on shelves from floor to ceiling.



Michael Lavoie of Vital Records leads a team of 69 employees who registered almost 360,000 documents in 2001. He compares the current imaging system to an old pickup truck.

"When we run out of shelves, we run out of space." Mr. Lavoie wants to replace paper documents with digital images.

Michael From of the Department of Revenue is helping Vital Records with its plans to acquire a modern imaging system.

"When we run out of shelves, we run out of space," Mr. Lavoie said.

The Digital Academy on document management came at an opportune time for Mr. Lavoie. He's working on a request for proposal (RFP) to replace the imaging system. The RFP will be part of a larger project to overhaul existing operations. The project is broken down into three phases, starting with improvements to the telephone system and moving on to IT systems that will streamline and automate workflow and make digital imaging possible for all documents, not just birth certificates.

Mr. Lavoie wants to integrate the new systems with the state portal and sees a day when hospitals will be able to send birth information to the state using the portal. He also wants to provide counties with direct access to his systems to make electronic certification of documents possible and information sharing between state and local governments fast and easy.

Collaboration didn't end with academy session

One of the goals of the academy session on document management was to bring state agencies together to learn as a group about imaging technology and begin a process of establishing standards everyone could use. Mr. Lavoie says the session also helped him with project planning and writing his project charter, which lays out the scope of work, justification and objectives, budget and schedule estimates, and risk factors.

If we're going to provide a service, we can't do it off the cuff anymore.

He also met Michael From, an information systems manager at the **Department of Revenue**, which is located not far from Vital Records in northeast Atlanta. As a result, Vital Records and Revenue are collaborating in ways that otherwise might not have happened. Vital Records has no on-site IT support, so Revenue has offered to help as much as possible since it's nearby.

Mr. From may also assist Mr. Lavoie by reviewing the RFP, evaluating the proposals and sharing what Revenue learned in building its document management system, considered a model for other state agencies. Mr. From also shared DOR's disaster recovery plan with Mr. Lavoie. Disaster recovery will be included in Vital Records' RFP. Now, Vital Records would be forced to retrieve copies of documents from 159 county offices if anything happened to its paper records. There's no off-site backup for computer and microfilm records.

Ready to tackle the "culture change"

Mr. Lavoie and Mr. From both expressed a strong desire to maintain the momentum of the academy session through an active users group. They also discussed various challenges to achieving the high goals Mr. Lavoie has set for Vital Records, including what they described as the "culture change" necessary before many people are comfortable with electronic processes and digital documents.

"People like to hold paper," Mr. From said, and Mr. Lavoie agreed.

Mr. Lavoie and his staff are ready to tackle the culture change and take other big steps to meet the public's heightened expectations about customer service, access and convenience. As he said, "If we're going to provide a service, we can't do it off the cuff anymore." ▮

Vital Records wants to simplify and automate a time-consuming process

A modern document imaging system would make it possible for Vital Records to simplify and automate a time-consuming, mostly manual process for recording births. Here's how it's done now:

Hospitals can dial-in on a modem to upload birth information.

Paper birth certificates are also mailed to the state office.

Vital Records

- examines and codes each record,
- stores the data on a mainframe,
- scans the paper birth certificate into the old imaging system and
- sends a paper copy of the birth record to the county where the birth occurred.

Information about other reportable events like marriages and adoptions must be manually entered into separate systems that aren't directly connected and, as a result, can't share information.

Imaging systems help Revenue reduce hassles and delay, increase accountability

Document imaging is more than a convenient way to store records in electronic format. These systems are at the center of redefining the flow of work within an agency so employees can provide services and information with greater ease, speed and accountability. In this regard, the **Department of Revenue** (DOR) may be a model for the rest of state government.

You can't shortcut what your requirements are in the long term.

DOR was a participant in this spring's Digital Academy on document management, sharing its solution for managing tasks common to most state agencies.

DOR operates two cutting-edge systems to meet separate but related needs. The Document Management System (DMS) is for high-volume scanning of tax forms, while the Correspondence Management System (CMS) tracks the lower volume of letters from businesses and individuals about their taxes.

An awesome task

DOR faces the awesome task of processing up to seven million tax returns annually for individuals and businesses. One million of them are handled during the week of April 15 alone. Every month, it also processes millions of income tax withholding and sales tax documents.

How does DOR do it? With DMS, the backbone of its operations, said Lannie Greene, director of DOR's Internal Administration Division.

Its equipment is among the most advanced available, enabling DOR to save time and money through such cutting-edge technology as two-dimensional barcoding, which eliminates manual data entry and its potential for human error. However, only a limited number of tax preparers are able to generate two-dimensional barcodes.

All tax documents are scanned into DOR's imaging system, and the information in documents without two-dimensional barcodes is manually entered into a database. Paper documents are later destroyed in accordance with strict procedures.

Mr. Greene keeps his focus on the future even as he oversees DOR's intense, fast-paced operations.

"Where do you want to be in 10 years?" is the central question guiding his ongoing planning process.

"You can't shortcut what your requirements are in the long term," he said. "You've got to make sure you have the proper hardware and support, and these things don't come cheap."

❶ **DOR's mailroom.** Tax documents — including individual and business returns, income tax withholding forms and sales tax forms — are opened and sorted manually.

❷ **Assigning a locator number.** Tax forms are assigned a document locator number before being scanned. The number is used to track documents and tax payments. Workers make sure tax forms and accompanying checks are kept together until they are scanned.

❸ **Separating forms and checks.** This newly installed equipment automatically separates tax forms from their accompanying checks while scanning the form. It makes preparing checks for deposit fast, easy and efficient.

4 Scanning two-dimensional barcodes. A DOR employee gets ready to scan tax forms imprinted with special two-dimensional barcodes. Every bit of information on a tax form can be compressed into a single barcode, which high-speed scanners read in a fraction of a second. The information is then automatically stored in a database. Hundreds of tax forms can be scanned and their information stored in minutes.

5 Quality assurance. DOR employees check the digital images of scanned tax forms to make sure they are clear and easy to read. Paper tax forms will later be destroyed in accordance with strict procedures.

6 Optical storage platters. After tax forms are scanned into digital images, the images are stored on these optical platters. Each platter holds 5.2 gigabytes.

7 Two jukeboxes. To retrieve an image stored on an optical platter, the platter is placed in a jukebox, which is connected to computers and monitors. Each one holds 230 platters for a total storage capacity of 1.2 terabytes. DMS stores about 30 million documents with 210 million images online in jukeboxes. The demand for storage is growing at a rate of four million images a year.

8 "Where do you want to be in 10 years?" It's the central question guiding Lannie Greene's ongoing planning process for DMS. He keeps a flow chart depicting how DOR processes tax forms.

Digital imaging enables DOR to manage large volume of letters

Besides processing millions of tax forms each year, DOR also handles tens of thousands of written inquiries from businesses and individuals about their taxes. To manage these letters, DOR implemented its Correspondence Management System (CMS) in October 2001.

Letters may be sent to various DOR offices around the state, and they can even be received by different employees in the same office. To ensure none of the letters get lost, employees scan them as they are received and save the digital image to a central database.

We're able to give consistent, accurate responses to taxpayers regardless of who they get on the phone when they call.

Each letter is given an account number and assigned to a specific person who becomes responsible for making sure the issue raised in the letter is resolved and a response is sent to the writer in a timely manner. While the "owner" of the letter can ask other employees to help research a question, he or she is always accountable for the final response.

Except for the scanning process, CMS is entirely Web-based, which means employees only need a browser to access it. At the same time, it's fully integrated with Word and includes templates for various types of response letters to make drafting a response fast and easy. A user simply clicks on the template of the response letter he or she needs, and the letter opens in Word with certain key fields automatically filled in, such as the taxpayer's name and address. There's even a flashing light bulb that changes color to indicate how long a letter has been waiting for a response. Once the response letter is sent, CMS automatically closes the case.

Building a complete record, all in one place

Since more than one employee may work on a letter, CMS features a screen where anyone involved in resolving a question can make notes about his or her efforts. This builds a complete record of all actions taken, including any special agreements reached with the taxpayer.

"It's like a manila folder where you keep everything that's transpired," said Michael From, a DOR information systems manager who oversees CMS.

That's a big benefit for Madeline Mangan, DOR's taxpayer advocate. "While I'm talking with a taxpayer, I can bring up a letter and provide an immediate confirmation about its status."

"We're able to give consistent, accurate responses to taxpayers regardless of who they get on the phone when they call," added Sandra Haga, DOR's IT director.

By tracking every letter, CMS also makes it easy to generate reports—including graphs—showing how much work is being done, who's doing it and how long it's taking. CMS even helps to identify potential problems with tax forms.

"If we see different companies making the same errors, we know the form might need to be changed so it's clearer and easier to use," said Ilarae Erdmann, a DOR information systems manager.

A key to success: involving system users early on

When DOR started planning CMS, it pulled together a project steering committee whose members represented every division. The agency wanted employees who would actually use CMS everyday to take the lead role in directing the programmers who developed it.

"They told us how to make it as user friendly as possible," said Biff Umbarger, DOR's director of tax processing analysis. Users also received extensive, customized training before CMS went into everyday use.

People have to be comfortable with technology before they will use it.

"People have to be comfortable with technology before they will use it," Mr. From said. Ernie Paul, who works in the office of DOR Commissioner Jerry Jackson, joined the steering committee and now acts as a liaison with CMS users to make sure the system continues to meet their expectations and needs. There's even a process for employees to suggest enhancements based on their ongoing experience with CMS.

It's all part of what Mr. From called the "cultural change" of moving from a manual, paper-driven process to an automated process enabled by modern information technology.

Before moving forward with new capabilities, DOR faces the challenge of maintaining what's already in place. CMS currently stores 90,000 records with about one million images, and it's growing every day. As the system grows, so does the need for storage capacity and computing power. ▮

Security group marks milestone

Every month, about 30 state agency representatives meet to make the state's IT networks as secure as possible. It's a tall order, but they're seeing results.

The security working group, an outgrowth of the Georgia Enterprise IT Leadership Forum, recently marked its first anniversary with a look at a year's worth of accomplishments and plans for next steps.

GTA's Walter Tong is pleased with the group's work so far. "Our major accomplishment has been developing an informal IT security infrastructure through which we can disseminate reports and alerts," he says. "We've also built valuable points of contact for security." As facilitator of the group, GTA has presented information about developing policies, following federal standards and building a public key infrastructure.

Members include those with administrative backgrounds as well as those with more technical experience, providing for a wide range of viewpoints and ideas. "We act as consultants for each other," Mr. Tong says. "We've helped each other with everything from security architecture to placement of firewalls and intrusion detection systems, hardware configuration and deployment of security tools."

The group's work has increased awareness of security among agencies. "We've already used the report and alert network to get the word out quickly about possible IT security threats," Mr. Tong says.

He notes that several agencies are leading the way in information security. "The **Georgia Student Finance Commission** and the departments of **Revenue, Education** and **Corrections** are doing a great job and are sharing information with other agencies."

A major focus for the group in coming months is the Converged Communications Outsourcing Project (CCOP) and its impact on security. Members also will continue to bolster the state's preparedness for cyber threats. ▮

A new door to government, from page 1

"We found widespread agreement that, first and foremost, the portal should be clear and easy to use," said Gina Tiedemann, director of GeorgiaNet, the GTA division leading development of the portal. "People want it to be secure and 'feel like Georgia.' They told us they were excited about the information the portal would make available."

The input is evident in the portal's design. Pull-down menus under "I want to…" and "How do I…" help users easily find what they're looking for. Security and privacy information is clearly displayed. A changing variety of Georgia photos keep the site interesting and appealing.

The portal also will bring efficiencies to government. State agencies will be able to more rapidly establish online services using common components for functions such as processing credit cards and updating addresses. Agencies will not have to invest money and time developing their own components. GTA has recently begun a component reuse initiative, which will include building a repository of shared components.

Building for the future

New services will be added to the portal in coming months. This fall, Georgians will be able to check the status of child support payments online.

GTA also is developing guidelines for agencies to use in making their Web site information compatible and available through the portal. Agencies that have questions or need assistance can contact their GTA account manager. ▮

"High touch" help center

If you're renewing your driver's license online or looking for state government information and find that you need a little assistance, GTA's Joe Gray and his staff are standing by.

The new georgia.gov Contact Center began operation July 1, the same day the state portal was launched. "We're here to be the entryway to state government," said Mr. Gray, manager of the center. "We'll help you find the information you need quickly and efficiently."

The contact center was developed in an incredibly short period of time—less than 40 days from concept to reality. During its first week, staff responded to several hundred phone calls and e-mails. More than 96% of the callers waited less than 30 seconds to talk to a staff person, and every e-mail was answered within 24 hours.

While most inquiries are about driver's license renewal, the center's five staff members are adept at directing people to the right contacts in other state agencies or even city and county governments when necessary. "We've had questions about regulations for opening a swimming pool, weights and measurements for long-haul trucks, and even legal and public safety issues," Mr. Gray said.

With extensive experience operating contact centers in the private sector, Mr. Gray is enthusiastic about the shift to state government. "It's great to be able to focus completely on service, without sales being associated with every call."

Assistance is available by e-mail at help@georgia.gov or by phone, 404-818-6600 in metro Atlanta, or 866-351-0001 statewide toll-free. The contact center operates Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

WSCA replaces selected statewide contracts

Selected statewide contracts were allowed to expire June 30, 2002, following an annual review by GTA to evaluate pricing and usage.

In place of the microcomputer and peripherals contract and RISC workstations contract, the state now relies on the Western States Contracting Alliance (WSCA), which Georgia joined about one year ago. WSCA combines the purchasing power of more than 36 state governments that have purchased more than $2 billion worth of equipment through the alliance.

WSCA offers the same equipment but at more competitive prices.

WSCA offers the same equipment as Georgia's previous statewide contracts but at more competitive prices. A state agency may still purchase brands not available on a WSCA contract if it can document a lower price for equipment with the same specifications. Local governments in Georgia can also use WSCA contracts.

Meanwhile, a new contract for planning services is being developed and is expected to be available for use by state agencies this summer. Current contractors will be available until the new contract is in place.

The contract for facsimile machines was not renewed or re-bid because of lack of use by state agencies. ▮

PMP certification study groups to begin

State agency staff interested in earning project management professional (PMP) certification are invited to participate in study groups facilitated by GTA's Office of Program Management.

The study groups will prepare participants to take a certification test administered by the Project Management Institute (PMI). With over 86,000 members, PMI is the world's leading not-for-profit professional association for project management professionals.

The number of PMP-certified project managers worldwide is on the increase," says Peggy Joyner, director of GTA's Office of Program Management. "In a competitive workforce, project managers are realizing the career advantages of certification as well as the importance of following proven principles for good project management."

The groups are open to anyone involved in project and program management, and participation is free. The only charge is for study materials, which cost about $80. The study groups will be led by one of GTA's PMP-certified consultants. Groups will meet for 1-1/2 hours once a week for 10 weeks beginning in late summer or early fall. Locations will be determined based on enrollment and participants' convenience.

Ms. Joyner is encouraging more project managers in state government to become certified. "Our track record is good," she says. "Every participant in the groups we've sponsored so far has achieved certification."

For more information, e-mail PMOMethodology@gta.ga.gov. ▮

Fast Forward Georgia

Published bi-monthly and available online at www.gta.ga.gov
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